



Academic Job Market Series

GRADTalk: Job Talks

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Today will provide a few
concrete tips on **how to**
prepare for a successful job
talk



Today's Agenda

1. Things to consider before crafting your talk
2. Crafting the talk
3. Delivery
4. Post talk (the Q&A)



1. Things to consider before crafting the talk:

- Format
- Topic



Things to Consider Before Crafting the Talk

- Format

- What are they asking you to do?

Examples from campus interview invitations:

“give a public presentation...on your research; we’d like you to talk for 40 minutes or so with 20 mins Q and A”

“You’ll also give a talk (roughly 45 minutes in length, with 30 minutes reserved at the end for questions). For the talk we are expecting a “teach your research” talk. A talk that good undergraduates would follow, but that describes your contribution to the field in a way that will engage people (in the field) who don’t work in your area”

“prepare a 30 minute presentation that focuses on your current research projects, your next research projects, and the way you would integrate those research directions into your teaching”



Things to Consider Before Crafting the Talk

- Topic:
 - What is the position? What type of institution?
 - What would your audience know? What would they appreciate?
- Remember that an invitation to a campus visit indicates that they like your work. A job talk, however, is not just about your work but rather how you communicate your work to a wide audience.



Questions?



2. Crafting the Talk:

- Content
- Structure
- Power Point
- Practice



Crafting the Talk

- **Content**

- Seek advice from your advisors to make sure that your topic works with the search committee requirements, the overall job description, and your comfort level
- You will usually have a mixed audience so you need to make the content accessible to a general audience. However, you will also need to make sure you drill down to the meat of your work



Crafting the Talk

■ Structure



Start broad/context

Narrow down

**Your project
Your project
Your project**

Specific significance

Broad significance



- The structure should be made clear visually and verbally at the beginning of the talk.
- Every transition should be expressed visually and verbally throughout the talk
- What you say and what you show should go hand in hand (and can help you structure both)



Crafting the Talk

■ Structure

- Your goal is to present your work in a memorable way so prioritize big picture over details
 - One central and straightforward point that everyone can remember should be your goal
 - Similarly: one point per paragraph one point per slide (Two points? Two paragraphs, two slides. No point? No paragraph and no slide)
- Prioritize logical over chronological
 - How you got to the point is not always important to your audience, they need the point
 - Put differently, take the liberty to reorder your research path so that it's easier to follow



Crafting the Talk

- **Structure**
 - Always begin by thanking the chair, the committee, and all who attend
 - Always end with a thank you
 - The golden rule is prepare to speak for a little less than the time you were given
 - If you were given 30-40 minutes, time yourself to make sure you don't go over 35-37. If you're at 41 edit
 - Seriously. Edit to 35-37



Crafting the Talk

- **Power Point**

- **Yes, please!**

- Clear, simple graphics
 - Only one or two fonts
 - Simple color scheme
 - One idea per slide
 - Minimal animation
 - Road map

- **You can and should control how long your audience is focusing on a slide:**

- Use a blank slide if you are moving forward and there's some time before you get to the next slide



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Crafting the Talk

- **Power Point**

- **No thanks!**

- Useless graphics
 - No focal point
 - Too much information per slide
 - Using power point as script
 - Letting images and graphs take over
 - Expecting audience to process graphs
 - Numbering your slides can be a good idea but don't use "page X of Y" if you have many slides:



Crafting the Talk

A photograph of Spock from Star Trek: The Motion Picture, wearing his blue uniform and pointing his right hand towards a control panel. A white speech bubble with a black border is overlaid on the image, containing text. The background is a dark control room with various panels and lights.

**I don't care if my
PowerPoint
presentation has
320 slides. You
are staying until
it's over.**



Crafting the Talk

■ Practice

- **ALWAYS** do a few dry runs, at least one mock with an audience
- TIME YOURSELF. You should NEVER (EVER!) go over the time you were given
- Make sure your own words aren't tripping you. If so, simplify sentences and vocabulary
- If using a script, use it as such:
 - Insert all your director notes such as “change slide,” “go to slide and point at Y,” “lift head, smile, tell the anecdote about X...”



Questions?



3. Delivery

- Conventions
- Getting into the zone
- Confidence
- Non-verbal
- Being Considerate



Delivery

- **Conventions**

- What are the conventions in your field—script or “off the cuff”?
- What are the conventions at the institution you are interviewing at?



Delivery

- **Getting into the zone:**
 - Ask if you can see the space ahead of time
 - Usually, you will be taken to the room where you'll be presenting ahead of time so you can set up. To speed things up, bring:
 - a flash drive with both a ppt and a slide show of your presentation
 - backup on cloud, email, etc.
 - equipment such as a dongle
 - Water
 - Pen and paper for taking notes in Q&A
 - Use the remaining time to rest; go to a quiet place and...



The image features two stylized black silhouettes of a woman and a man in power stances. The woman on the left has her hands on her hips and her hair blowing in the wind. The man on the right is shown from the back, with his hands on his hips, highlighting his muscular physique. The background consists of yellow and white geometric shapes, including triangles and rays, creating a dynamic and energetic atmosphere.

Practice your power stance!



Delivery

- **Confidence**
 - You're the expert!
 - Commit to the moment
(when you commit you don't need to fake it!)
 - Don't sweat the small stuff



Delivery

- **Non-Verbal**
 - Handshake/Smile
 - Eye contact
 - Warmth of Voice
 - Open Gestures
 - Posture
 - Attire
 - Enthusiasm*



***BEWARE OF THE ENERGY DROP!!!**

- Quite often the job talk is at the end of the day and you may be exhausted **BUT** “low energy” and “lack of enthusiasm” are the KISS OF DEATH. They may negatively affect your confidence. May we suggest:



Delivery

- **Being Considerate:**
 - TIME!!!
 - Seriously, TIME!!!
 - Not kidding—never go over the time!!!
 - Acknowledge your audience
 - Help your audience follow you
 - Simple, short sentences
 - Clear verbal sign posts
 - Clear power points



Questions?



4. Q&A (Speaking as Responding)



- Remember: even if it's tough, usually in job talks your audience is not “out to get you.” Rather, they want to see how they can engage with you and you with them. So,
 - Be respectful
 - Be courteous
 - Don't let any one question take over the discussion or dominate its tone and direction



- When a question comes out of nowhere and will probably go nowhere:
 - Respond to the question you want to respond to
 - “That’s a useful suggestion/perspective—I’ll look into it as I move ahead. For now I chose to focus on X for reasons A, B, C...”
 - “Yes, and...” (in spirit!)

Remember: the talk and Q&A are about asserting your scholarly voice and presence within your community!



Questions?



For Appointments:
gradgargoyle.uchicago.edu

- > Academic & Career Development
 - > Presenting & Interviewing: Advising

OR

- > Communication Skills and Teaching
 - > GRADTalk: Advising

